

GARY LOCKE
Governor



STATE OF WASHINGTON
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

P.O. Box 40002 Olympia, Washington 98504-0002 (360) 753-6780 TTY/TDD (360) 753-6466

Media contacts:

Kirsten Kendrick, Governor's Communications Office, 360-902-4136;
Chris Drivdahl, Governor's Salmon Recovery Office, 360-902-2580;
Tim Waters, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, 360-902-2262;
Susan Zemek, Salmon Recovery Funding Board, 360-902-3081

**Gov. Gary Locke Presents State's First Regional Salmon Recovery
Plan to Federal Government**

VANCOUVER – Dec. 15, 2004 – Gov. Gary Locke, together with the Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board (LCFRB) and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), today presented to the federal government the first locally developed regional salmon recovery plan for Washington state during an event in Vancouver.

The plan was developed in partnership by local, state and tribal governments; community leaders and non-profit groups. Five other groups in Washington are preparing similar recovery plans to submit to the federal government within the next seven months.

"This is definitely a historic event," Locke said. "This plan is an extraordinary achievement – a product of those who live and work near these watersheds. This is the right way to do salmon recovery."

In 1991, the federal government listed the first Pacific Northwest wild salmon as near extinction under the Endangered Species Act. By 1999, wild salmon had disappeared from about 40 percent of their historic breeding ranges in Washington, Oregon, Idaho and California. In Washington, the numbers had dwindled so much that salmon were threatened or endangered in nearly three-fourths of the state. During the past several years, Locke has worked with the state Legislature on efforts to reverse the trend, including:

- Renegotiating international treaties to protect the most endangered fish and more fairly distribute the catch for fishers in the United States and Canada;
- Establishing conservation goals in rivers shared with Idaho and Oregon;
- Studying hatcheries to determine how to improve them; and
- Providing more than \$165 million through the state Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) for salmon restoration and protection projects.

"In every area of the state, we've gotten people together to talk about the future of our salmon, and we've responded with funding and resources to turn their vision into reality," Locke said. "Today, every watershed with salmon has at least one citizens' volunteer group working to restore and enhance salmon habitats."

“We have made a lot of progress in salmon recovery during the past few years,” Locke continued. “We have returned more than 300,000-acre feet of water to streams where salmon need it, removed more than 1480 barriers and opened more than 1600 miles of habitat to salmon for spawning and rearing. We have funded more than 480 projects to restore and protect salmon habitat and have completed more than 560 water quality cleanup plans.”

At the event, Locke; Jeff Koenings, WDFW director; and Bill Dygert, LCFRB acting chair, presented the regional salmon recovery plan to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA-Fisheries) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

“The completion of this recovery plan marks the first step in our collaborative efforts to rebuild Lower Columbia’s natural salmon species,” Koenings said. “The leadership and cooperative spirit crucial to the plan’s development will remain crucial as we begin the hard work of making it a reality.”

Bob Lohn, Northwest regional director of NOAA Fisheries, said, “Local involvement is absolutely vital to salmon recovery. Without locally led efforts, no recovery plan will succeed. We’re committed to this plan as the foundation for salmon recovery. It’s good for salmon and it’s good for the region.”

The plan is aimed at restoring five species of salmon as well as other fish to healthy, harvestable levels during the next 25 years. It encompasses areas on the lower Columbia River as well as 18 major and a number of lesser tributary basins in Clark, Cowlitz, Lewis, Skamania, Wahkiakum, and portions of Pacific and Klickitat counties in Southwest Washington.

The Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board’s approach integrates several different planning efforts – including Endangered Species Act recovery planning, Northwest Power and Conservation Council sub-basin planning, and state salmon recovery and watershed planning—into a single regional plan. The plan’s goals are to restore the region’s salmon to healthy, harvestable levels. It also addresses other fish and wildlife that are important to the region as well as providing a foundation for healthy watersheds for people.

“From the outset, the board has focused on preparing a recovery plan that works for both people and the fish of the region,” said Jeff Breckel, executive director of the Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board. “This plan belongs to the agencies, local governments, tribes, scientists, organizations, fishermen, landowners and citizens who joined with us to meld science and community values into a blueprint for recovery.”

Locke added, “In restoring our salmon runs, we are restoring the icon of the Pacific Northwest. In restoring this icon, we will also restore our spirit by living in harmony with our environment. This is the legacy I believe we must leave to our children and the generations that follow.”

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